

**HB 1382 State Procurement – Prohibited Certifications – Boycotts of Foreign
Countries
House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
March 11, 2026
Position: Favorable**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony **in strong support of HB 1382.**

I want to begin by stating clearly that I fully support the State’s policy of avoiding contracts with businesses that engage in discriminatory practices. I also commend the efforts of legislators and community leaders who are working to address the rise in antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism, white nationalism, and all forms of hatred in our state. These commitments are essential to the safety and well-being of all Marylanders.

At the same time, HB 1382 addresses a specific and deeply concerning problem: the State’s prior requirement that vendors certify they are not participating in a boycott of a foreign country. This policy—originally established through Executive Order 01.01.2017.25—raises significant constitutional concerns because it conditions State contracts on a vendor’s political expression. For many Maryland businesses, voicing criticism of the Israeli government or its policies could be interpreted as a “boycott,” even when such criticism is rooted in legitimate human-rights concerns. The risk of violating such provisions and being labeled as engaged in a prohibited boycott could have severe reputational consequences, jeopardizing a vendor’s ability to secure future contracts or funding from other sources. Administrative penalties, fines, or other sanctions could also be imposed, creating unnecessary economic hardship. Punishing Maryland vendors in this way misses the mark and does nothing to reduce hate or antisemitism.

Many individuals, human-rights organizations, and international bodies continue to raise alarm bells over Israel’s ongoing genocide in Gaza, its acts of fierce aggression in the West Bank, as well as in Lebanon, Syria, and as we are seeing now -- in Iran. Critics point to United Nations resolutions, the expansion of settlements, military operations, arbitrary detention, restrictions on movement, and other practices that have contributed to significant suffering and are widely described as violations of international law. Like numerous human-rights groups worldwide, I believe Israel is engaging in policies that constitute systemic discrimination, including apartheid, and that many civilians have faced devastating consequences, amounting in some cases to acts of

genocide. It is unacceptable that any Maryland vendor contributing to our state's economy should be penalized simply for holding or expressing these same views.

HB 1382 restores the fundamental principle that State contracting must remain viewpoint-neutral. It ensures that vendors are evaluated based on their qualifications, capacity, and ability to serve Maryland—not on whether they adopt or refrain from expressing political positions about foreign governments. This bill reinforces Maryland's longstanding commitment to free expression, inclusivity, and nondiscrimination, without in any way weakening the fight against bigotry in all its forms.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 1382.

Thank you,

Heather Rounds

Heather Rounds - Baltimore County Resident